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Reducing food waste through social innovation

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Summary

Summary of the Fusions Project

The overall objective of the FUSIONS project (Food Use for Social Innovation by Optimising waste prevention Strategies) is to achieve a Resource Efficient Europe by significantly reducing food waste. This will be accomplished by the harmonisation of food waste monitoring, showing the feasibility of socially innovative measures for optimised food use in the food supply chain and by giving policy recommendations for the development of a EU27 Common Food Waste Policy.

This report is a deliverable from the FUSIONS Work Package (WP) 4 which sets out to test the impact of social innovation on reducing food waste through a suite of feasibility studies (FS) conducted within the duration of FUSIONS project. The feasibility studies are a key part of FUSIONS, delivering actual reductions in food waste alongside social benefits.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of the feasibility study

- To test out social innovation projects
- To provide recommendations on replication of the project (i.e. advice and guidance on rolling out similar projects in other cities / countries).

1.2 Context of the feasibility study

This Gleaning Network EU feasibility study was developed as an idea and submitted for consideration by a panel comprising WP4 core partners¹ under the EU Fusions project. It was one of 39 ideas for social innovation projects, obtained via a stakeholder survey, assessed by the panel against a set of agreed selection criteria. After the proposal was selected and the final budget confirmed, the work on the FS started in January 2014. The Gleaning Network UK feasibility study is one of seven projects implemented in 2014-2015.

The aim of this report is to:

- To provide details of the work done, and results of the feasibility study.
- If the projects were successful, to provide guidance on how the initiatives can be replicated elsewhere.

2 Background and Approach

2.1 Background on the feasibility study concept and principles

Food waste at a farm level in high-income countries is caused largely by the strict cosmetic standards of supermarkets and retailers, who refuse to buy produce that is the wrong shape, size or colour. Overproduction and 'gluts' of produce (sometimes a result of farmers over-planting to ensure retailers have enough cosmetically perfect fruit and vegetables) and last-minute changes to demand forecasts often related to weather also contribute food waste at a farm level.

Gleaning Network UK aims to address these issues, initially by rescuing and redistributing the 'waste' crop, and ultimately by raising awareness of – and campaigning to eradicate – the causes of this waste. If not for the intervention of gleaning, such farm-level food waste is at best sent for animal feed or anaerobic digestion, but is often sent to landfill.

The Gleaning Network UK is supported by volunteers, harvesting unwanted produce and distributing it onto charities that feed vulnerable people. When the supply of harvested produce exceeds the capacity of local charitable organisations, Gleaning Network UK arranges for the produce to be distributed to social enterprises or related secondary markets for processing into products such as chutneys or juices.

The Gleaning Network UK is made up of 5 local gleaning 'hubs' across the UK, which bring together local volunteers, growers and redistribution charities to harvest and distribute produce to those who need it. These hubs are strategically located in areas where there is a concentration of horticultural production, an availability of volunteers and beneficiary organisations or food redistribution agencies.

This feasibility study looked to build on the success of the UK Gleaning Network and assess the best method of disseminating information to organisations interested in starting a gleaning network in their region, as well as the feasibility of developing gleaning networks in these regions. Feedback have previously reviewed the global 'gleaning landscape' to identify other successful gleaning projects. Most notable among these is the Society of St Andrew (SOSA) in the USA, with whom Feedback have established an ongoing dialogue; SOSA kindly provided detailed information on their ways of working. Also notable is Leket in Israel, who have for several years run a well-regarded and large-scale gleaning program. Feedback have had cursory conversations with Leket and hope to collaborate with them in the future.

The feasibility study was carried out in Belgium, France, Spain and Greece. Additionally, organisations in the Czech Republic and the Republic of Ireland, whilst not part of the feasibility study, have now begun to develop gleaning projects with the assistance of Feedback and have expressed interest in joining and promoting Gleaning Network EU. In September 2015, Zachran Jidlo (an NGO in the Czech Republic) organised a Feeding the 5000 event, and carried out a gleaning day in advance – the vegetables they gleaned were cooked and eaten as part of the event.

2.1.1 Project Objectives

The specific project objectives for this feasibility study included:

- The development of a guide to setting up a gleaning network, giving detailed information around building relationships with stakeholders (particularly growers), building and maintaining a large volunteer base who are able to mobilise at very short notice, communications and marketing plans and fundraising.
- Specific support for organisations that are in the nascent stages of setting up gleaning networks, including organisations in Belgium, France, Spain and Greece. This included supporting these organisations to hold pilot gleaning days in each of their regions, in order to test the feasibility of the gleaning network in each region and refine the gleaning guide – ensuring that the advice given is applicable in a number of different regions.

2.1.2 Benefits of a Gleaning Network

The potential benefits of a Gleaning Network can include:

1. Recover and redistribute farm-produced food that would otherwise have been wasted
2. Give opportunities for people of all ages to:
 - a) reconnect with farmers and the way their food is produced
 - b) gain a direct insight into important issues facing the food system such as food waste and food sustainability
 - c) become empowered to directly help tackle these issues
 - d) become a more active part of their community.
3. Raise awareness (far beyond the scope of the direct participants) of the issue of farm-level food waste and its underlying causes, for example through engagement with the media and social networks
4. Gather information and data to contribute to research on farm-level food waste
5. Give a voice to farmers and growers, who are all too often 'invisible elements' of a supply chain; bring them into the debate and to share their stories
6. Demonstrate the power of networks as disseminators of information and knowledge-sharing, at many levels: regional, national, international

2.1.3 Stakeholders

Feedback has taken the lead on this feasibility study.

Feedback is an environmental organisation that campaigns to end food waste at every level of the food system. We catalyse action on eliminating food waste globally, working with governments, international institutions, businesses, NGOs, grassroots organisations and the public to change society's attitude toward wasting food. Feedback is based in the UK, with a staff of 10 to 12 people (flexing resource as required) and an extensive network of volunteers. Their Gleaning Network UK project has five regional hubs throughout the UK, each of which is overseen by a voluntary coordinator.

The primary stakeholders in this feasibility study are the organisations and individuals who operate Regional Gleaning Projects (RGPs) within the countries included in this study are:

GLEANNING NETWORK BELGIUM (Belgium)

Gleaning Network Belgium (Belgium) is run solely by 1 highly-motivated and dedicated volunteer based in Brussels. At present, and throughout the course of this feasibility study, the project has no paid staff, no resources and no funding other than the small amount provided from FUSIONS. To date, the gleaning activities in Belgium have focussed on the Flemish-speaking region (Flanders); there is a future ambition to extend gleaning into the French-speaking region (Wallonia).

RE-BON, RÉSEAU DE GLANAGE NANTAIS (France)

Re-Bon is based in the Nantes region in the west of France; created by two volunteers, the project began gleaning in February 2013, limiting the scope of their activities to a maximum 50km radius (from Nantes). Re-Bon's activities are largely made possible by a wider team of volunteers, who use their own cars to travel to the farm and to redistribute the produce. They received some start-up funding from another French project, Disco Soupe, and request a joining fee from their members.

BOROUME (Greece)

Boroume is a small NGO based in Athens, created in 2011 by three founders. Its operation is funded by donations (or in-kind support) from charitable foundations, businesses and individuals. Boroume tackles food waste across the food sector, acting as a communication hub between donors and beneficiaries. Unlike the other gleaning projects in this feasibility study, Boroume do not *directly* carry out gleaning activities. Rather, in line with their model, they act as a bridge: connecting farmers with surplus food to recipient organisations and volunteer groups who can collect the food. Boroume are proactive in their attempts to find and recruit farmers to the gleaning project.

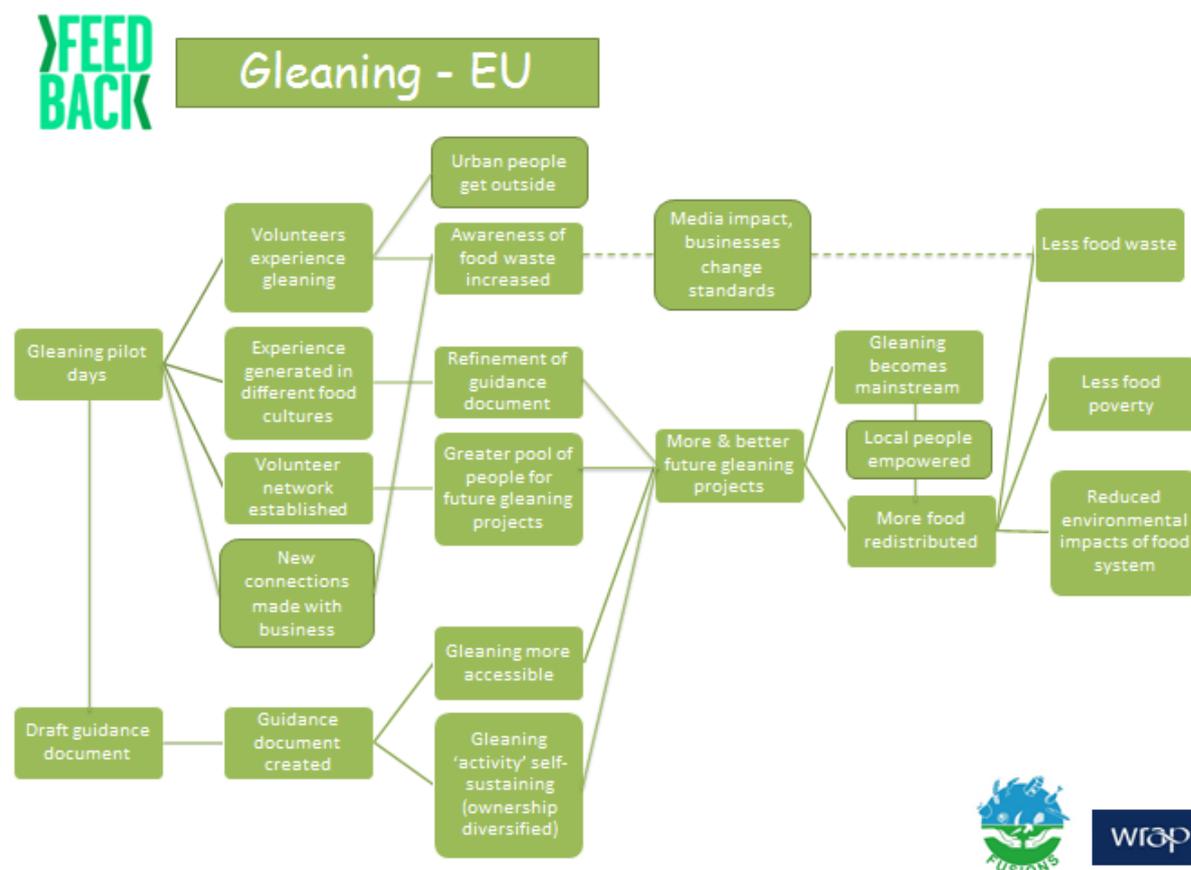
ESPIGOLADORS (Spain)

Espigoladors is a social enterprise based in Catalonia. In addition to gleaning from farms, they collect rejected produce from wholesale markets. The food that they save is re-purposed in one of two ways: a portion is donated to charities, and the remainder is transformed into products such as jams, soups, creams and sauces. Espigoladors transform the products themselves, under the brand 'Es-Imperfect', working with people at risk of social exclusion. Proceeds from the sale of these products help to fund Espigoladors work.

The secondary stakeholders are the volunteers, beneficiaries (organisations who receive the food) and farmers who make up each network: they are too many to be listed here, but should be recognised as of vital importance. Each Regional Gleaning Partner maintains a database of such stakeholders: we aim to provide case studies on some of these in the Gleaning Guide, along with guidance to new gleaning projects on how to find, contact and engage potential stakeholders.

2.2 Approach of the feasibility study

The project logic map below outlines the approach to this feasibility study.



The approach to the feasibility study can be seen in clear timetable of key tasks below:

Task description	Start Date	Target End Date	Actual End Date
1) Develop overview of project plan + objectives	01/01/14	28/02/14	28/02/14
2) Determine the project's Evaluation Metrics	01/03/14	31/03/14	31/03/14
3) Identify and enlist stakeholders; Create working group	01/03/14	30/04/14	30/09/14
4) Hold meetings in each region to understand local context, stage of development of gleaning project	01/05/14	30/06/14	01/11/14
5) Agree project budgets with key stakeholders	01/01/15	31/07/14	30/04/15
6) Run pilot gleaning days	01/01/15	31/10/14	10/08/15
7) Follow up with regional organisations after gleaning days: incorporate feedback into gleaning guide	01/01/15	30/11/14	21/08/15
8) Write gleaning guide	30/09/14	28/02/15	31/08/15

Task description	Start Date	Target End Date	Actual End Date
9) Create online dissemination tool & related content	01/04/14	01/05/15	30/09/15

2.2.1 Outline of Key Tasks

1. Develop overview of project plan + objectives

The project plan and objectives were shaped by key findings and learnings from Feedback's experience of developing and running Gleaning Network UK, as well as from preliminary conversations with other nascent gleaning initiatives (prior to the commencement of this study)

2. Determine the project's Evaluation Metrics

The original list of Evaluation Metrics was based primarily on Gleaning Network UK's experience and processes. However, during the project it was realised that some stakeholders were not able to reliably and consistently record certain metrics (for example, wholesale and retail value of the produce). As these metrics were not seen as critical to the project, they were later removed.

3. Identify and enlist stakeholders; create working group

a) The initial Stakeholder Group encompassed organisations from France, Spain and Poland. During the summer and autumn of 2014, Poland's horticultural industry was severely impacted by the Russian embargo on EU produce; The reaction of the officials was unfortunately slow, resulting in an unclear situation, where farmers were not sure how they can use their produce and in what way they will be helped for the loss of market, causing much confusion and uncertainty. This meant that in certain EU countries – notably in Poland – farmers were hesitant about letting gleaners onto their fields to access crop they could not now sell; in some cases the food was simply left to rot.

b) Around this time, we were able to incorporate two additional stakeholders into the study – from Greece and Belgium. Both of these stakeholders presented a different approach to gleaning, and significantly different levels of resource; therefore we felt that their inclusion would enhance the scope of the study.

4. Hold meetings in each region to understand local context and stage of development of the gleaning project

Meetings with the stakeholders in their country provided an excellent overview of the opportunities, challenges and working methods relevant to each region.

5. Agree project budgets with key stakeholders

As there were significant differences between the regional gleaning projects, as with (4), it was important to create individual budgets specific to each region. For example, in one region the principal barrier to gleaning may be "establishing contact with farmers" – in which case a larger portion of the budget might be allocated to travel and communications. In another region, the principal barrier may be lack of funding for transport.

6. Run pilot gleaning days

In Europe, gleaning opportunities are greatest during spring, summer and particularly autumn, as the majority of crop-types become ready for harvest. While it had originally been envisaged that the pilot gleaning days would be completed within 2014, we decided to extend the timescale until August 2015. This enabled a larger

number (and greater variety) of gleaning days to be incorporated into the study. This was also relevant as Belgium and Greece were included in the project part way through.

7. Follow up with regional organisations after pilot gleaning days, incorporating feedback into gleaning guide

The feedback, learnings and experiences of the regional projects have been vital in shaping the Gleaning Guide. It has confirmed there is no “one size fits all” approach to gleaning; but rather a number of different “operating models”. This is key to replication – as potential new gleaning projects will be able to select the model most relevant to their region.

8. Write gleaning guide

In writing and revising the gleaning guide, the principal challenge has been striking the right balance between comprehensiveness and concision.

9. Create online dissemination tool & related content

In repeated discussions with the stakeholders, the key criteria identified for any dissemination tool were: user-friendliness and ease of access (for example, having a bespoke website requiring a new user account & password, was not favoured); visual appeal; relevance to audience. It was strongly felt that the dissemination tool should not be “hidden away” within an “academic” resource.



Figure 1 A photo from a gleaning event in Belgium.

3 Overview of results

3.1 Main results

The headline results from this feasibility study were:

- 82 gleaning days were organised and completed
- 29,571 kg of produce gleaned
- 40 no of farms participated
- 33 no of beneficiaries to receive food
- 292 no of volunteers

- Setting up of a website and support group (called Gleaning Network EU), which will continue supporting regional gleaning activity in the future

3.1.1 Key difference between regional gleaning projects

A key finding found from this study, which was not captured in the results themselves, is the significant differences between the Regional Gleaning Projects (RGPs). These differences include:

- The level of experience held by the RGP (in gleaning) prior to the commencement of this study
- The size and structure of the RGP, its number of personnel (paid and/or unpaid), its capacity and resources (financial and otherwise)
- The geographical scope of the RGPs gleaning remit
- The RGP's operational approach to gleaning
- Factors relating to the region in which the RGP was operating: cultural, social, economic, political, environmental and horticultural

A brief description of each RGP is given in section 2.1.3 *Stakeholders*, while a more detailed description is included within the Guidance Document (Handbook). Whilst there are many differences between the RGPs, the results show that each has been successful. This demonstrates that there is no "one size fits all" approach to setting up a Gleaning Network.

3.2 Assessment of results

3.2.1 Quantity of Food Recovered through Gleaning

In total 82 gleaning days were held across the four RGPs, gleaning over 29,500 kgs produce that would have otherwise gone to waste. Table 3, illustrates a breakdown of the key results by Region.

Table 3: Key Results from each Region

Region	No. Gleaning Days	Total QTY Gleaned (kg)	Total No. Food Portions*	Average QTY gleaned (kg)	Most Common Crop Category	Avg No. Volunteers per Glean
Belgium	12	6,627	82,838	552	Brassica	6
France	36	5,354	66,925	149	Root Veg	5
Greece	6	6,500	81,250	1,083	Citrus Fruit	5
Spain	28	11,090	138,625	396	Brassica	4
Total	82	29,571	369,638			

(*1 portion of food = 80g)

The average quantity of food recovered per event (gleaning day) also varied across the RGPs. It's interesting to note, although Boroume (Greece) carried out the least number of gleaning days, the average quantity of food recovered per event (gleaning day) was highest. However, this data does not necessarily relate to the efficiency of the gleaning activity, but may equally be an indication of the RGP's operational approach: i.e. Re-Bon's model allows them to carry out a higher-frequency of small-scale gleaning activities.

Overall, the greatest quantity of food recovered was by Espigoladors in Spain.

3.2.2 Number of gleaning days

In total 82 gleaning days were held across the four RGPs. The number of gleaning days varied depending on the region of the gleaning network. Re-Bon in France held the most gleaning days with 36, while Boroume in Greece held the least with 6. A number of factors contributed to this:

- **Political and Economic Climate** - Over the course of this feasibility study, Greece has increasingly been subject to political and economic uncertainty. Additionally, there appears in Greece there is a long-standing culture of suspicion concerning the activity of NGOs, owing to past incidences of corruption. Taken together, these factors have made it more difficult to recruit Greek farmers to the gleaning project.
- **Region-specific vs nationwide operation** – The operation in Boroume is nationwide across Greece, while Re-Bon deliberately limited their scope to a 50-60km radius from their base in Nantes, west France. This localised approach has allowed Re-Bon to develop a good reputation in their region. Farmers tend to know and communicate with other local farmers and will promote the gleaning network to others as they pass on their positive experience.

- **Type of gleaning operational approach** -The Gleaning Network approach in Boroume is different to the other RGPs. Boroume do not (as standard) carry out gleaning days themselves, but rather connect farmers with recipient organisations. The approach of other RGPs meant they attended the gleaning days themselves and have been able to build relationships with farmers for future events.

3.2.3 Types of Crop Recovered

By a considerable margin, the most common crop-category recovered through gleaning – with results aggregated across all regions – was Brassica (cabbages, broccoli, cauliflower), which accounted for a quarter of the total quantity. 62% of the Brassica recovered was considered as waste owing to Cosmetic Standards; a further 25% was attributed to Surplus.

The other notable crop-categories were:

Salads: 4,416kg (15% of total)
 Root Vegetables: 4,174kg (14% of total)
 Citrus Fruit: 3,500kg (12% of total)

There were some notable regional differences, for example that Citrus Fruit was only gleaned in Greece and Spain; no Brassica was gleaned in Greece. Such differences are largely in accordance with the horticultural production of the respective countries.

Further details of the quantity gleaned by food type through the gleaning events can be seen in table 4.

Table 4: Quantity of food diverted (in kilograms) from waste through Gleaning (by Category, Sub Category and Country)

Category	Sub Category	Belgium	France	Greece	Spain	Total
Fruit	Citrus Fruit			1,900	1,600	3,500
	Other (Fruit)		115	1,000		1,115
	Top Fruit	200		1,000	1,814	3,014
Fruit Subtotal		200	115	3,900	3,414	7,629
Vegetable	Allium	200	540		74	814
	Brassica	5,400			2,295	7,695
	Other (Vegetable)	200	90	1,000	1,918	3,208
	Root Vegetable	115	2,485		1,574	4,174
	Salad	512	1,314	1,600	990	4,416
	Squash		810		825	1,635
Vegetable Subtotal		6,427	5,239	2,600	7,676	21,942
Total		6,627	5,354	6,500	11,090	29,571

3.2.4 Reasons for Waste

Overall, Cosmetic Standards were found to be the key driver of waste (45.6% measured by total KG gleaned), with Surplus (34.4%) also being highly significant. This can be seen in greater detail in table 5.

Table 5: Reasons for Availability of Waste Crop (available to glean)

Region	Reason for Waste (Kgs)						
	Cosmetic	Surplus	Trial/Rota	Other	PstHarv	Qty/Age	Trade
Belgium	4,427	1,400			200	400	200
France	625	2,299	1,000	435	690	220	85
Greece	3,600	2,900					
Spain	4,830	3,562	1,697	1,001			
Total	13,482	10,161	2,697	1,436	890	620	285
% of Gr. Total	45.6%	34.4%	9.1%	4.9%	3.0%	2.1%	1.0%

Key to Table 5

- Cosmetic** Crop not deemed suitable for sale due to Cosmetic Standards; e.g. size, shape, colour
- Surplus** Crop surplus to requirements: e.g. farmer has fulfilled an order & has no secondary outlet
- Trial/Rota** Crop only grown for Trial or Rotation
- PstHarvest** Crop left in field after harvesting (e.g. due to limitation of machinery)
- Qty/Age** Crop not deemed suitable for sale due to quality (e.g. under-ripe) or age (life remaining)
- Trade** Crop not sold due to trade or commercial difficulty, e.g. order cancellation

3.2.5 Engagement and Recruitment

This feasibility project has successfully engaged and recruited key stakeholders. As table 6 demonstrates all the RGPs set up gleaning projects.

Table 6: Summary of Stakeholders

Region	Result	Notes
No. Regions (Countries)	4	Belgium, France, Greece, Spain
No. Regional Gleaning Projects (RGPs)	4	(1 per each region, as above)
No. Farms (Total, all regions)	40	
No. Beneficiaries (Total, all regions)	33	
No. Volunteers (Total, all regions)*	292	

* It has not been possible to determine the total number of unique volunteers- i.e. individual persons. The figure given in the table above represents the total number of volunteers on all gleaning days; it is probable that this includes a number of individuals who attended more than 1 gleaning day.

Farmers

With the exception of Greece (as outlined above) none of the RGPs faced major difficulties in recruiting farmers to the gleaning project; though all reported that this took considerable time and effort. Overall, the number of farmers engaged via the project was broadly in line with our expectations. Further research is required (beyond the scope of this project) to understand the barriers to gleaning for farmers: i.e. the reasons that may

discourage some farmers from participating in gleaning projects.

Volunteers

Recruitment of volunteers was not found to be an obstacle to gleaning. However, the coordination of volunteers takes time, and several of the RGPs expressed interest in the development of a more efficient system (e.g. a web-based platform).

Beneficiaries

Generally, each RGP faced little difficulty in finding organisations who wished to receive and use gleaned produce. In some instances, however, the maximum quantity of food available for gleaning exceeded the capacity of the recipient organisations: in which case the RGP has no choice but to leave a portion of the available crop unharvested, as to recover the crop would only create a waste problem further downstream. There are a number of potential solutions to this. One is cross-border collaboration between EU countries: for example, Gleaning Network Belgium has already begun collaborating with a recipient organisation based in the Netherlands. Another is the fostering of more Social Enterprises who can utilise larger quantities of produce via processing, such as Kromkommer (also in the Netherlands). The Food Surplus Entrepreneurs Network may be pivotable in identifying and supporting these opportunities for development.



Figure 2 A photo from a gleaning event in Greece.

4 Guidance for setting up a similar project

This section will help stakeholders in the process of setting up similar projects in other cities or countries.

4.1 Key factors for setting up a similar project

As a result of this feasibility study, a set of simple steps on how to set up a gleaning project have been established (see section 4.2).

However, it should be noted that while most or all of these steps are common to all gleaning projects, the steps themselves are only a starting point and guideline. In this study alone, the four gleaning networks have shown differences in the way the gleaning network may operate, the size of the network, the size of the glean and cost.

Examples of how a gleaning network might operate

- Gleaning Network Belgium, is run by a single volunteer and with almost no funding,
- Epsigoladors have generated jobs and revenue through the creation of a social enterprise and branded products;
- Re-Bon focus their efforts on a 50km and transport food using their own personal cars
- Boroume aim to catalyse gleaning in all corners of Greece by acting as a connecting-point for farmers, volunteers and beneficiaries.

Size of the gleaning network

Gleaning projects can be run by one person or by many. If the latter, it is important that there is a clear understanding of responsibilities. The experience suggests the initial workload will be concentrated around finding, contacting and 'recruiting' farmers. Experiences in this respect varied significantly between countries, based on a variety of factors – for example, the nature of their agricultural sector (Greece has thousands of small-scale farmers, in contrast to the UK which has seen more consolidation and the establishment of large-scale agribusiness).

Size of the glean

There is no minimum or maximum size of a glean. Re-Bon have often gleaned a few hundred kilos using just 3 or 4 volunteers, whereas Feedback have taken up to 50 volunteers to a farm and gleaned several tons. All fresh produce will be valuable to beneficiaries. The common 'bottlenecks' to gleaning (i.e. factors that limit the maximum amount to be gleaned) are availability of volunteers,

availability of packing equipment such as crates, and the capacity of the beneficiaries – there is no sense in gleaning surplus crops from a farm if this is only going to create waste further downstream.

The cost of a gleaning project

A gleaning project can potentially be setup and run at zero cost. This will require volunteers to travel to farms at their own expense; the farmers to donate packing crates or sacks, and loan any required tools for the day; and the beneficiaries to provide transport to collect the gleaned produce. All of these things are achievable! However, the growing recognition of food waste as an urgent problem, coupled with gleaning networks proven ability to be an important part of the solution, suggest that a variety of funding streams may be available – it is often worth seeking these out.

4.2 Main steps in setting up a gleaning project

4.2.1 The infographic below shows the main steps to follow when looking to set up a gleaning project



4.2.2 Gleaning Guide

As part of this feasibility study, a guide to setting up a gleaning project has been produced. The full gleaning guide can be seen on Gleaning Network EU website².

The guide is comprehensive and will provide detailed advice on setting up a similar project. It covers:

- Overview & Background; Gleaning Network EU & Fusions
- Case Studies - Short Introduction of existing Gleaning EU members
- Getting Started – 10 Step Guide to creating a Gleaning Project
- Food Waste – Overview of food waste on farms
- Farms & Farmers – Finding and working with
- Volunteers – Finding and working with
- Beneficiaries – Finding and working with
- Transport, Logistics and Equipment – Overview
- Costs – Costs and funding
- Safety first - First Aid, Insurance, Health & Safety
- Organisation & systems – how to organise a gleaning day; systems & processes
- Media & social media – Overview
- Impact – recording data and measuring impact

4.2.3 Gleaning Network EU website and use of social media

Feedback are currently reviewing options for a Gleaning Network EU website, which could:

- a) Provide a means of sharing and disseminating key information, and also materials such as the gleaning guide
- b) Provide a forum for ongoing communication between existing and new RGPs
- c) Provide a showcase for the aims and benefits of gleaning, in order to promote gleaning to potential new stakeholders (farmers, beneficiaries, volunteers, funders).

Throughout the feasibility study, social media has played an important role in meeting the above needs, and will continue to do so. A Gleaning Network EU website would work in conjunction with social media channels such as Facebook, twitter and Instagram.

² <http://feedbackglobal.org/gleaning-network-eu-2/>

Below is a Facebook post from Gleaning Network Belgium (July 2015) advertising a forthcoming gleaning day and calling for volunteers:

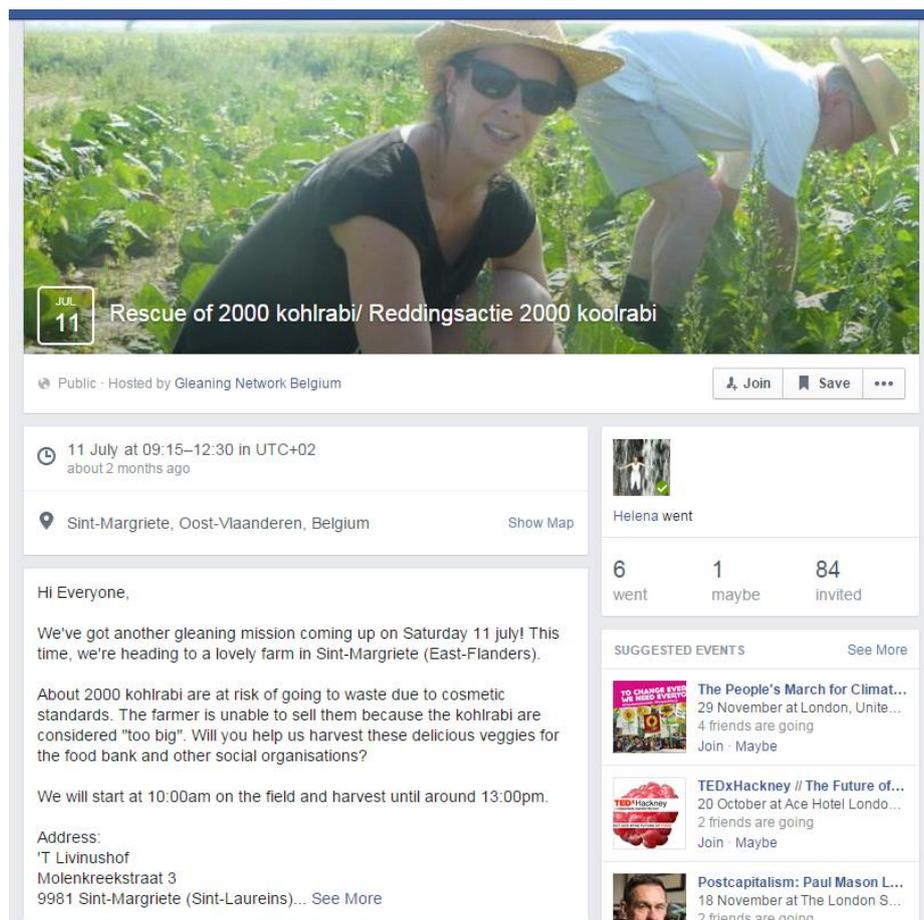


Figure 3 A screenshot of a social media page of the Gleaning partner in Belgium, showing how they advertise a gleaning event.

4.3 Overcoming difficulties

A number of challenges may be encountered. These are summarised below along with potential solutions. Further detail on these is given in the gleaning guide.

Volunteers – low numbers

This problem was rarely encountered during the feasibility study, but can happen when a farm is less easily accessible by public transport. This can be overcome by encouraging and facilitating car-sharing – meaning volunteers without their own transport can reach the farm – and if possible having funds to reimburse travel/petrol expenses. It is also recommended to develop good relationships with groups and organisations near to the farms where you glean; some of these groups may also have access to their own transport such as a minibus.

Bad weather

Bad weather can happen either in advance of a gleaning day, or on the day itself. The main problem bad weather can cause in advance is to impair the quality of some crops

(e.g. potatoes, once dug, start to deteriorate soon after getting wet) or to prevent them being suitably packed (produce that is packed and stored wet will not always dry out quickly). The only solution is to ensure that the produce is gleaned, redistributed and used as quickly as possible. If bad weather happens on the day itself, this can discourage some gleaning volunteers. It is always a good idea to advise appropriate clothing (e.g. waterproofs) just in case ; and if the weather is looking bad, consider shortening the length of the gleaning day and advising volunteers of this in advance.

Beneficiaries – insufficient capacity to store or use food

Sometimes the quantity of food gleaned exceeds the capacity of the local beneficiary(s) you work with. The following recommendations may help avoid this situation :

- Develop relationships with several beneficiaries, rather than relying on one.
- Consider different types of beneficiary : charities, food banks, community groups, social enterprises, even commercial organisations who could potentially pay for the gleaned produce
- Don't rule out cross-border collaboration ! For example, Gleaning Network Belgium have developed an excellent relationship with an organisation based in the Netherlands who will on occasion send volunteers and a vehicle

Farmers – changing their mind about hosting a gleaning day

Once farmers commit to a gleaning day, it's rare for them to change their mind – but this can happen occasionally. The best way to reduce this risk is to ensure that the farmer has sufficient information in advance (such as a summary document on who you are and what you do, which organisations receive the produce etc.) and that you speak with the farmer in advance to identify and discuss any concerns they may have. More detail on common farmers concerns will be given in the gleaning guide.

Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS

Our main conclusions for this feasibility are as follows

There is considerable enthusiasm for gleaning as a response to food waste

This enthusiasm was noted in all types of stakeholders.

- *The farmers* who were previously very frustrated at having no option but to throw away perfectly good food and could instead now see this food going to those who needed it; farmers also welcomed gleaning as a means to highlight the general issue of food waste.
- *The beneficiary organisations*, some of whom previously had little or no access to fresh food
- *The volunteers* who were given the chance to access the countryside, engage with like-minded people and contribute to solving a problem they really cared about

There are various approaches to gleaning

We found that there is no “one size fits all” approach to gleaning. Each of the 5 gleaning projects that feature in this report operates in different ways. We expect to see even more variety as further organisations adopt gleaning in their countries. One interesting example may be FoodCloud in the Republic of Ireland, who has a proven ability to deliver technology-based solutions to food waste.

Gleaning can be quick, easy and low-cost

Gleaning, especially on a small scale, can be carried out at little cost and with few resources, and a motivated group of people could potentially setup a pilot within a few weeks. If necessary, funding could then be sought to help scale up the gleaning activity.

There is an ongoing need for gleaning

Sadly, there are no immediate signs that the problem of farm-level food waste will disappear soon. For this reason, we believe that gleaning will only become more important over the coming years – the growth and consolidation of a European wide Gleaning Network offers a real opportunity to bring this issue to the attention of the media, the public, retailers and policy-makers .

CHALLENGES

While small-scale gleaning can be carried out with little financial resource (as mentioned above), to create and maintain an effective gleaning project requires time, effort and energy. If gleaning projects have to rely solely (or largely) upon the efforts of dedicated unpaid individuals, there will always be a real possibility that the gleaning project will not be able to continue indefinitely. Furthermore, the excellent momentum that has been generated and harnessed by Gleaning Network EU could quickly die away without a continued effort, and perhaps also greater tools (e.g. a website) and materials (e.g. short films and printed case studies). We therefore believe that more funding needs to be made available to support both individual gleaning projects and Gleaning Network EU.

Gleaning Network EU

The Gleaning Network EU helps regional organisations to run gleaning events supported by volunteers, harvesting produce leftover on the farms, and distributing it onto charities that feed vulnerable people.

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